




July 25, 2011

SUBJECT: New Recruitment and Position Management Requirements

TO: Administrator's Council
Administrative and Financial Management Council

FROM: Joon Park 
Director, Human Resources Division

Over the last few years, the Administration and the Department have initiated a number of human resources related reforms and initiatives. In order to meet two of the new Departmental requirements, one related to hiring reform and one related to position management, the Human Resources Division (HRD) is implementing the use of two new forms that managers must submit with the respective personnel related actions starting August 1, 2011. The first form is the "REE Recruitment Agreement." This form must accompany any request to recruit. The second form is the "REE Position Management and Workforce/Succession Planning Checklist." This Checklist must be submitted with the establishment of any new position and/or any vacancy related decision (e.g., decisions to abolish or recruit).

The Department has committed to implementing and enforcing improved hiring practice reform goals and increased diligence in position management. All management and human resources staff are expected to work together to meet these goals. We recognize that the new forms and the additional responsibilities included in them place additional burdens for our managerial and administrative staff. While this is especially true in these times of increasing budgetary constraints, we hope that the current hiring restrictions will allow us all a period of decreased recruitment activity in which we can adjust to the new requirements. In addition to one-on-one guidance, HRD will make training on the use of these forms available via webcast or teleconference beginning as early as this week (July 25th-29th).

Hiring Reform Requirement: REE Recruitment Agreement:

On May 11, 2010, President Obama issued a memorandum requiring federal executive departments and agencies to improve the federal recruitment and hiring process. A major target of the memorandum was the requirement to improve the quality and speed of agency hiring. To meet the Administration and subsequent Office of Personnel Management's requirements under this hiring reform initiative the Department established a FY 2011 goal of completing the hiring process with an average of 90-calendar days per hire.

To underscore the importance of our meeting this objective, you should know that the Secretary of Agriculture is being briefed on a weekly basis on agency hiring reform metrics. In addition, the Department is holding all SES-level leadership and management responsible for meeting the hiring reform initiative goals. As of April 30, 2011, the Agricultural Research Service's (ARS') cumulative average number of days per hire was 171 days and we were notified of the immediate need to implement reforms to our internal processes to bring our hiring metrics in-line with the 90-day goal.

In order to meet the Department's request and to provide managers with a clearer understanding of the various processes, timeliness expectations, and the primary responsible parties involved throughout the hiring process, HRD has developed the REE Recruitment Agreement. Since mid-May, human resources staff has been using the new process documented in the form to improve ARS' time-to-hire. As of June, utilization of this new process has resulted in ARS' cumulative average time-to-hire dropping to 165 days per hire. Unfortunately, ARS time-to-hire continues to exceed the 90-day goal. We hope that management's use of this form will help hiring managers and human resources staff to focus on the recruitment process and remain vigilant with regards to the timeliness of our hiring.

HRD continues to work with the Department's Office of Human Resources Management to examine any and all possible flexibilities that may be exercised to improve ARS' position with regard to the 90-day average hiring time requirement and ARS' unique staffing needs.

REE Recruitment Agreement Implementation Guidance:

For any new recruitment action initiated after July 31, 2011, the REE Recruitment Agreement form and outlined process must be followed. Recruitment actions already with Human Resources do not require this form, however we encourage management to work with Human Resources staff to expedite the hiring process and adhere to the timelines outlined in the form to the extent possible.

For your convenience a copy of the form has been attached for your convenience. In addition, the form has been made available on the AFM main page under AFM Hot Links at: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/> and on the AFM/HRD website under Staffing at: http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/staffing_recruit/index.htm.

The first step of the REE Recruitment Agreement is to "Contact HR to have a preliminary discussion about the potential position description." For the first few recruitments that you may have with this new form and process, we encourage you to use that first step as an opportunity to clarify any questions and expectations you may have about the form and hiring timeline.



Position Management Requirement: REE Position Management and Workforce/Succession Planning Checklist:

Along with the new hiring timeline expectations, the Department developed new requirements related to position management. Personnel costs represent a major portion of the budget. As the Department and agency face increasing budgetary constraints the Department is requiring increased attention to the management of positions to ensure that personnel costs are being spent in the most efficient and effective manner possible. The new position management requirements were first outlined in an October 2010 Departmental Regulation, Position Management and Vacancy Control, DR4020-250-002. Use of the Position Management and Workforce/Succession Planning Checklist is mandated by the Departmental Regulation. Human Resources must prepare an annual report directly related to this Checklist and be able to demonstrate ARS' compliance.

REE Position Management and Workforce/Succession Planning Checklist Guidance:

In order to meet the requirements of the Departmental Regulation, hiring managers must complete this form whenever they establish any new position and/or with any action to fill/abolish a vacant position (e.g., recruitment, reassignment, etc.). Second level supervisor review and signature is required before the form can be finalized. Similar to the REE Recruitment Agreement, this Checklist will only be required for establishing new positions or with any vacancy related actions initiated after July 31st.

For your convenience a copy of the form has been attached for your convenience. In addition, the form has been made available on the AFM/HRD/Classification website under the "Classification Related Forms" section at:
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/classification/index.htm>.

If you have any immediate actions that will require you to complete this form, we encourage you to consult with your assigned Human Resources Specialist with any questions that you may have about the form.

